

First Gentile Believers ~ Part 4

Kefa Goes to Cornelius

In my last post, we learned that *Kefa was inwardly perplexed as to what the vision that he had seen might mean*. In this post, we learn that **Kefa Goes to Cornelius**.

^{23b} The next day, he (Kefa) got up and went with them, accompanied by some of the brothers from Yafo; ²⁴ and he arrived at Caesarea the day after that. Cornelius was expecting them—he had already called together his relatives and close friends. ²⁵ As Kefa entered the house, Cornelius met him and fell prostrate at his feet. ²⁶ But Kefa pulled him to his feet and said, "Stand up! I myself am just a man."

Fell prostrate at his feet to welcome him, also to honor him as **God's** messenger, but not to "worship" him (as some English versions have it). As a **God-fearer**, **Cornelius** would have known better. However, **Kefa's** response, *Stand up! I myself am just a man*, shows that **Kefa** misread what **Cornelius** did as an act of idolatry to be expected from a pagan. This had to be a very awkward moment for both of them.

²⁷ As he talked with him, Kefa went inside and found many people gathered. ²⁸ He said to them, "You are well aware that for a man who is a Jew to have a close association with someone who belongs to another people, or to come and visit him, is something that just isn't done. But God has shown me not to call any person common or unclean; ²⁹ so when I was summoned, I came without raising any questions. Tell me, then, why did you send for me?"

~ Acts 10:23b-29 (CJB) (Emphasis added).

You are well aware that for a man who is a Jew to have a close association with someone who belongs to another people or to come and visit him is something that just isn't done. Before examining whether **Jews** did, in fact, keep themselves aloof from **Gentiles**, take note of **Kefa's** careful word choices. He uses the Greek word "*alophulos*," which means "*someone who belongs to another tribe*," used only here in the New Testament. Also, the Greek word "*athemitos*," used only twice in the New Testament, does not mean "*unlawful, forbidden, against Jewish law*," as found in other English versions, but rather "*taboo, out of the question, not considered right, against standard practice, contrary to cultural norms*."

Kefa Now Understands the Meaning of His Vision

But God has shown me not to call any person common or unclean. If **Jewish** law made **Gentile** products and practices unclean, it would have been only human, all too human, for people to have extended the description, *unclean*, to **Gentiles** themselves. Such attitudes would have been not so much taught as caught, absorbed from the whole milieu, and these attitudes' influence would have quickly become pervasive. This is why it took direct intervention from **God** to shake **Kefa** loose from them.

As I explained in my last post, this verse proves that the meaning of **Kefa's** vision had nothing to do with abolishing **kashrut's** laws. With this statement and its expansion in vv. 34–35 **Kefa** puts his dealings with **Cornelius** and his friends on a new footing: a barrier that both sides might have thought insuperable, that would have made true spiritual communion impossible, is removed altogether.

In my next post, we will continue to examine **Kefa's** encounter with **Cornelius** in **First Gentile Believers ~ Part 5** were in **Cornelius Shares His Vision with Kefa**.